



Community Development Program Champion Communities

The highly competitive nature of the Empowerment Zone and Enterprise Community's selection process resulted in many communities developing their strategic planning process, required as part of the application requirements, and being left with a plan without any automatic Federal support when not selected. Following Round I designations in 1994, many of the applicant communities followed through with some portion of their plans and sought other types of assistance from various sources (Federal, State, local, etc.). This, in turn, led to additional benefits. Therefore, rural Champion Communities were established by USDA and are chosen from among the pool of applicants who sought designation as an Empowerment Zone or Enterprise Community and completed a satisfactory strategic plan.

As Champion Communities, they receive technical assistance from USDA staff in order to enhance capacity-building within community organizations and to assist in the implementation of their strategic plan. These communities have found that the strategic planning process and goal setting have significantly contributed to the communities' ability to apply for and receive funding from both USDA Rural Development and other sources.